



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Meeting Minutes - **Draft**

Representative Town Meeting

Moderator Jean-Claude Ambroise, Representatives Karin Adams, Scott W. Aument, Sr., Joseph Baril, Nancy E. Barnhart, Alicia Bauer, Genevieve Cerf, Susan Chase-Hildebrand, Michael Collins, Christine Conley, Susan Deane-Shinbrot, Luanne E. DeMatto, Nancy Driscoll, Dave Ferreira, Neal Gardner, Patrice Granatosky, Dolores Harrell, Karen Hatcher, Keith L. Hedrick, Jonathan Heller, Lynn Crockett Hubbard, Michael Dean Johnson, Rosanne E. Kotowski, Jim Loughlin, Elizabeth Luck, Jackie Massett, Bruce A. McDermott, Roscoe Merritt, Constance Miller, Scott Newsome, Richard J. Pasqualini, Jr., Betty A. Prochaska, Pam Ryley, Jack Sebastian, Dana S. Semeraro, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, Archie C. Swindell, Lori A. Watrous and Ivy R. Williams

Wednesday, March 14, 2012

7:30 PM

Groton Senior Center

Regular Meeting

A. ROLL CALL

Moderator Jean-Claude Ambroise called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

35 members were present, and a quorum was declared. (Rep. Merritt arrived at 7:50 p.m.)

The Moderator reported that Reps. Johnson, McDermott, Sebastian, Semeraro, Svencer and Swindell notified the Town Clerk of their absence.

Members Present: Moderator Ambroise, Rep. Adams, Rep. Aument, Rep. Baril, Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Chase-Hildebrand, Rep. Collins, Rep. Conley, Rep. Deane-Shinbrot, Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Driscoll, Rep. Ferreira, Rep. Gardner, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Hatcher, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hedrick, Rep. Heller, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Kotowski, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. Luck, Rep. Massett, Rep. Merritt, Rep. Miller, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Pasqualini Jr., Rep. Prochaska, Rep. Ryley, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Watrous and Rep. Williams

Members Absent: Rep. Johnson, Rep. McDermott, Rep. Semeraro, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. Svencer and Rep. Swindell

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Superintendent of Schools Paul Kadri, Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds Wes Greenleaf, Board of Education Chairman Kirsten Hoyt and Board of Education members, Mayor Heather Somers, Deputy Town Clerk Janet Downs and Assistant Town Clerk Sally Whitney.

B. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The members observed a moment of silence followed by the Salute to the Flag led by Mayor Somers.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 8, 2012

A motion that the minutes be approved was made by Rep. Pasqualini, seconded by Rep. Baril and so voted unanimously.

D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

Craig Koehler, 263 Brook Street, stated that he served on the Phase II School Design Committee. He spoke in favor of the Board of Education supplemental appropriation. He believes that this plan needs to move forward for the 2012-2013 school year so that students attending middle school are not adversely affected. He urged support by the RTM for these renovations and the development of a solid plan for Phase II School Design that will eventually be decided by a Town referendum.

Nancy Gilly, 44 North Road, noted that she does not believe the reported savings figures released by the BOE Central Office based on the closing of Fitch Middle School. She questioned the costs for maintaining the school-based health center at Fitch Middle School and the expenses

associated with closure of a school. She feels that without a long term plan in place, it may be more effective to leave things as they are and not use a "band-aid" approach to renovating schools.

Lisa Tess, 84 Ensign Drive, Mystic, voiced her support for the additional appropriation for middle school modifications. She trusts the projected figure of \$12 million in savings over the next five years while a long term plan is developed. She stated that the failed Phase II School Design referendum was a teachable moment for the community. She believes that it will take five years to develop a plan, get approval and start school construction. She commented that due to the mistrust between the BOE and elected government bodies, potential new residents may avoid moving to the Town of Groton.

Karen Petrick Podurgiel, 70 Ocean View Avenue, Mystic, asked the RTM to approve the funding for the BOE middle school consolidation plan. She feels that this is the best option to move forward. She noted that if this plan is not approved, the 2012-2013 school year is at risk and students and teachers will be adversely affected. She believes that savings of \$12.7 million over the next five years will benefit everyone in the community.

Deborah Johnson, 196 Flanders Road, Mystic, urged RTM support for the additional appropriation. She is afraid of the BOE budget cuts if this is not approved and fears that Cutler Middle School would be closed since Fitch Middle School has more square footage. She noted that changes this year have been challenging, but that this consolidation plan moves the schools forward and allows implementation in August.

Casey Flax, 632 Noank Road, Mystic, stated that it is important that students know where they will be attending school in September. She believes that this plan will avoid many difficulties and additional changes that will affect students more than taxpayers. She asked the RTM to approve the current plan.

Kevin Trejo, 536 Shennecossett Road, agrees with previous speakers. He stated that he is upset with the process and that it is moving too quickly. He feels that it is being forced on the community. He noted that he and others have an issue of trust with the Central Office and BOE and that change is needed to rebuild the community's trust.

Mark Somers, 67 Ramsdell Street, stated that the community needs to stop looking back at how the Town has arrived at this point and look at the current plan that is proposed. He feels it is very important that students know as soon as possible about the changes for the next school year. He encouraged everyone to stop dwelling on how we got here and to move forward.

E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

Moderator Ambrose announced that he referred Legislative Item 2012-0066 Board of Education Supplemental Appropriation Request to the RTM Education Committee under RTM Rule 6.5.3. This item is on the agenda for this meeting for RTM action.

He stated that several communications were received from Ed Johnson and forwarded to members.

He mentioned that copies of the Twenty-eighth RTM Rules were distributed this evening. He asked members to contact the Town Clerk's office if they did not receive a copy.

The Moderator requested volunteers to serve as liaisons to the Mayor's Revenue Task Force and the Town Council. Rep. Ferreira volunteered for the Mayor's Revenue Task Force.

Moderator Ambrose informed members that budget books will be available for pick-up on Friday morning at the Town Clerk's office. He noted the various functions that he attended during the

last month.

F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER

1. Financial report

Mr. Oefinger reported that the Fund Balance as of June 30, 2011 is approximately \$10.1 million; the General Contingency balance is \$350,000; the Capital Reserve balance is \$1,025,213. The increase is attributable to interest income and recording fees.

2. Monthly briefing

The Town Manager highlighted various items from the Town Manager's News. He recognized Investigator Kelly Crandall for being selected to receive the 2011 Officer of the Year Award in the Community Service Category by the Connecticut Association of Women Police.

G. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Mr. Kadri reported that mandatory State testing is taking place this week. He noted that the Board of Education (BOE) zero percent increase budget has been submitted to the Town Council. The proposed budget is based on consolidation of the middle schools for the next school year. He mentioned that \$10,000 was raised by the "Dancing with the Stars" fundraiser sponsored by the Groton Education Foundation. He noted that the money is used for teacher grants. He stated that Fitch High School Seniors raised \$1,200 thru a basket raffle for the Alcohol Free Graduation Party.

H. LIAISON REPORTS

Town Council/Board of Education/RTM

Rep. Heller reported on the meeting held last week. He noted that Bob Peruzzotti and Councilor Harry Watson will be the co-chairs. He stated that the intended mission of this joint committee is to bridge communications between all three bodies of Town government. The joint committee will discuss concerns, issues and ideas that will benefit the education of the students in our community. He noted that the committee will be meeting on the first Wednesday of the month.

I. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. FINANCE - Chairman Granatosky

No meeting, no report.

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES - Chairman Ferreira

Chairman Ferreira read the minutes of the meeting held on February 29, 2012. (Minutes are attached to the permanent record.)

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Ferreira, seconded by Rep. Luck and so voted unanimously.

2012-0052 RTM Involvement in Broadening Town Revenue Base

INVESTIGATION INTO HOW RTM CAN BE INVOLVED IN BROADENING THE TOWN'S REVENUE BASE

This matter was Deleted from Referral List - No further action for March 14, 2012.

See the minutes of the RTM Community Development & Services Committee meeting held on February 29, 2012.

3. EDUCATION - Chairman Hedrick

Chairman Hedrick read the minutes of the meeting held on March 14, 2012. (Minutes are attached to the permanent record.)

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Hedrick, seconded by Rep. Massett.

Chairman Kirsten Hoyt clarified that the Board of Education has had three consecutive years of zero increase budgets.

Rep. Kotowski clarified that her statements in committee were in regard to what items were reimbursable, not how many votes were taken to approve the resolution.

The vote to approve the minutes carried unanimously.

2012-0066

Board of Education Supplemental Appropriation Request

RESOLUTION APPROVING AN FYE 2012 CAPITAL RESERVE PROJECT ENTITLED "MIDDLE SCHOOL MODIFICATIONS"

WHEREAS, the Groton Board of Education, through a vote on December 19, 2011, determined that the Groton School District would be best served with a consolidation of the middle schools from three to two beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, and

WHEREAS, in order to implement the proposed consolidation plan, portable classrooms will need to be installed and other improvements made at both Carl C. Cutler and West Side middle schools, and

WHEREAS, cost estimates have been prepared by Board of Education staff with the assistance of outside consultants, and

WHEREAS, the Superintendent of Schools has advised that the latest cost estimate for the total needed improvements is \$1,385,800, and

WHEREAS, it has been agreed that any state reimbursements for this project returned to the Town will be split evenly between the Board of Education and the Town, and

WHEREAS, both the Board of Education and Town of Groton agree that any cost reductions to this project will be equally shared by both the Board of Education and the Town of Groton, and

WHEREAS, the purchase and architectural design for two double portable classrooms at Carl C. Cutler Middle School is estimated to cost \$688,820, and

WHEREAS, the purchase and architectural design for one double portable classroom unit at West Side Middle School is estimated to cost \$376,280, and

WHEREAS, remaining costs associated with the project at West Side and Carl C. Cutler middle schools is estimated to cost \$320,700, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that an FYE 2012 Capital Reserve Project entitled "Middle School Modifications" is approved in the amount of \$1,385,800 with said amount to be funded as follows:

- \$700,000 from Board of Education funds;
- \$200,000 from the FYE 2012 General Fund Contingency; and
- \$485,800 from the Capital Reserve Fund.

Refer to RTM under Rule 6.5.3.

A motion was made by Rep. Hedrick, seconded by Rep. DeMatto, that this matter be Adopted.

Moderator Ambrose welcomed Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds Wes Greenleaf and BOE Chairman Kirsten Hoyt.

Rep. Heller stated that he agrees with Mr. Trejo that trust needs to be rebuilt with the Central Office and BOE Administration, but that the Town needs to move forward with the middle school modifications. He quoted Mayor Somers from the Town Council meeting of last week; her words

swayed him to support the motion on the floor.

Rep. Gardner stated he will not support the motion as he feels that the timing is bad and that budget deliberations are "just around the corner".

In response to several questions from Rep. Gardner, Mr. Kadri stated that the project should come in under budget unless something catastrophic happens. He stated that Wes Greenleaf has a proven track record for researching, scrutinizing and overseeing many school projects and bringing them in on or under budget. Mr. Greenleaf added that he does not anticipate exceeding the budget for school maintenance personnel costs.

Rep. Cerf stated that after studying the information provided, she will support the motion on the floor. She feels there is a problem with the recent closing of so many schools and would like a proactive approach to curtail the costs of maintaining vacant school buildings.

In response to Rep. Merritt, Mr. Greenleaf explained the difference in the portable costs for Cutler Middle School and West Side Middle School.

The Town Manager reported that the Planning Commission approved the middle school modifications on March 13, 2012.

Rep. Kotowski stated that she would have supported this motion if the modest renovations were the final plan for the middle schools. She feels that any new school construction referendum will be defeated since taxpayers cannot afford any tax increases.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 24 - Moderator Ambrose, Rep. Baril, Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Collins, Rep. Conley, Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Driscoll, Rep. Ferreira, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Hedrick, Rep. Heller, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. Luck, Rep. Massett, Rep. Merritt, Rep. Miller, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Pasqualini Jr., Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Watrous and Rep. Williams
Opposed: 10 - Rep. Adams, Rep. Aument, Rep. Chase-Hildebrand, Rep. Deane-Shinbrot, Rep. Gardner, Rep. Hatcher, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Kotowski and Rep. Prochaska
Abstain: 1 - Rep. Ryley

4. RECREATION - Chairman Streeter

No meeting, no report.

5. PUBLIC SAFETY - Chairman Pasqualini

No meeting, no report.

6. PUBLIC WORKS - Chairman Collins

No meeting, no report.

7. RULES & PROCEDURES - Chairman Massett

No meeting, no report.

9. CONSOLIDATION - Chairman Pasqualini

No meeting, no report.

J. OTHER BUSINESS

Rep. Kotowski shared a letter that she sent to the Town Council requesting that the Council hold the line on this year's budget and suggesting that many "nice to have" items be eliminated. She realizes that it is very difficult for the Town Council to prioritize services according to what taxpayers need and what they can afford to pay.

Superintendent Kadri commented that he is glad to go forward with the development of plans to create good schools in the Groton community. He noted that Groton is currently eligible for up to

80-85% reimbursement for school construction due to the State's designation as a racially imbalanced school district. Mr. Kadri reported that Rep. Moukawsher recently informed him that the Town should try to take advantage of this current reimbursement level since it is not known how long it will be available.

K. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 9:05 p.m. was made by Rep. Barnhart, seconded by Rep. Harrell and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

Janet L. Downs, Deputy Town Clerk

Sally A. Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk